REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-15, 17-29 and 61-68 are pending. Claims 1, 61, 62, 66-68 have been amended. No new matter is added.

Claim 61 is objected to as being in improper dependent claim. The claim has now been amended to independent form. Withdrawal of this objection is requested.

Claims 1-15, and 17-20 are rejected under 35 USC 112, 1st paragraph as failing to comply with the written description requirement. Claim 1 has been amended to recite that the gaming machine is configured for tournament play and the game card is submitted, conforming to blocks 804 and 806 in FIG. 20. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claims 1-15, 16-29 and 61-68 are rejected under 35 USC 112, 1st paragraph as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. The examiner seems to be under the impression that determining the duration a player may play must show that both the player's allowable remaining playing time and the time remaining in the tournament in progress must both be data in storage (for claims 6 and 24) or encoded in the identifier (for claims 7 and 25).

However, the specification at paragraph [0242] shows that the information on the card (such as the identifier) is sent to the tournament server that determines the player's available playing time balance. There is no indication that the remaining time in the pending tournament must also be stored on the server or stored on the card. The claims comply with 35 USC 112 since the determination is disclosed as performed by the server (lines 6-8 on paragraph [0242]), or by the gaming machine (lines 8-10). To clarify this, claims 1, 62, 66 and 67 have been amended to show that the time remaining in the pending tournament is not associated with the identifier itself. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

Claims 1-15, 16-29 and 61-68 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, 2nd paragraph as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. This rejection is respectfully traversed. The examiner states that it is not clear how the duration is based on the identifier and the time remaining in the tournament. As discussed above, in paragraph [0242] of the application, it is not stated that the identifier is associated with the time remaining in the pending tournament. As discussed above, the claims have now been amended to so indicate. The duration of the player's remaining playing time is associated with the identifier. See also, paragraph [0256] where the player's available playing time balance may be stored. Accordingly, it is submitted that the claims comply with 35 U.S.C. 112, 2nd paragraph and withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claims 1-15, 17-20 and 62-66 are rejected under 35 U.S.C., 2nd paragraph as allegedly being incomplete. Claims 1, 62, 66 and 67 have been amended to indicate that receipt of the identifier is at a controller comprising a processor and a memory. The step of determining the identifier has not been specifically recited since it is applicants' position that the step of determining whether the identifier is received from the first gaming unit is authenticated inherently requires that the identifier be determined. The other steps cited by the examiner as being omitted were previously in claim 1. Claim 1 has also been written to clarify that it is the gaming unit that is selected by the player, as previously correctly assumed by the examiner. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that all the issues under 35 U.S.C. 112 have been resolved and withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claims 1-15, 17-29 and 61-68 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker '163, in view of Walker '486, in view of Walker '173 and Shulman, all of record. This rejection is respectfully traversed. In the Office Action, there is no reference or passage cited by the examiner that teaches that a gaming unit selected by a player is first configured for playing in a tournament when a tournament is in progress and, after an identifier is received of the player, and remaining playing time determined, the gaming machine is enabled to play in a tournament thereby allowing a player to use the gaming units to join the tournament in progress. In the Office Action, the examiner assumed that applicants' claims were directed to the embodiment of configuring the unit for

playing in the tournament in response to receiving the identifier when the identifier is determined to be authentic. However, as discussed above in connection with rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112, the claims have now been clarified to show that the machine is first configured as shown in applicants' FIG. 20. The examiner stated that nevertheless configuring a gaming machine to play a particular game would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art in view of Walker '173 disclosing a method of configuring a game upon an identifier. However, Walker '173 does not indicate that the player may do this while a tournament game is already in progress or that the player may do this after he has selected a gaming machine to play which is configured to play in a tournament. Even if the gaming machine has been previously configured to play in a tournament, the examiner has not cited any passage in any of the references to show that the machines may be configured for the player to join while a tournament game is already in progress and to join other players in that tournament during his remaining allowed duration.

The examiner further states that it is not clear to him how all the embodiments of the invention may be incorporated into one invention. However, it is respectfully pointed out that when the claims are directed to necessitating determination of the time remaining in a tournament in progress, all the claimed embodiments are the same invention, none of which are shown in the references cited by the examiner. The examiner interprets Shulman as showing a method by which a player can enter a tournament in progress. Shulman is directed to a series of poker games. Firstly, there is no timing in a poker tournament. So Shulman is completely absent of the concepts of both the duration of the time the player may play based on his identifier, and the concept of the time remaining in the tournament in progress. Moreover, it is not stated nor would it be reasonable to allow a player in Shulman to join a poker game that is in progress. Accordingly, it is not obvious to combine Shulman with the remaining references.

For the foregoing reasons, it is submitted that the claims are unobvious over the combination of references and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, it is submitted that the claims are patentably distinct over the cited art of record. Additional limitations recited in the independent claims or the dependent claims are not further discussed because the limitations discussed above are sufficient to distinguish the claimed invention from the cited art. Accordingly, applicants believes that all pending claims are allowable and respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance for this application from the Examiner.

Applicants hereby petition for any extension of time which may be required to maintain the pendency of this case, and any required fee for such extension or any further fee required in connection with the filing of this Amendment is to be charged to Deposit Account No. 504480 (Order No. IGT1P280). Should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the undersigned can be reached at the telephone number set out below.

Respectfully submitted,
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